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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

The Home of the California Road-runner.—On March 25th, 1903, one of the boys, a student in my Commercial School, told me of a road-runner's nest in Cholla Valley, and after school hours we started out to take a picture of the nest and to take the eggs.



NEST OF ROAD-RUNNER

After a walk of about two miles we arrived at the rustic abode, and found Mrs. *Geococcyx Californianus* at home, but she was somewhat shy and did not wish to have her picture taken, so we had to be satisfied with one of her nest and eggs, which are shown in the accompanying illustration.

The nest was a rather compact one, made of small weeds and twigs, carefully laid and woven among the branches of the "cholla" or "devil cactus" so common in Southern California. The outside diameter was about eleven inches, while the saucer shaped interior was about one and one-half inches in depth and six inches

in diameter. The eggs, four in number, and nearly white, measured 41 mm. in length by 30 mm. in diameter.

This wise little bird has a strange habit of building among the protecting thorns of the devil



YOUNG ROAD-RUNNERS

cactus, among whose thousand sharp points the old bird runs with apparent impunity, while the bristling spines keep out many an enemy and many an inquisitive visitor. In fact the thorny beds of cactus seem to be the favorite resort of the road-runner, and in the spring she may often

be seen leading her little brood of tiny chicks in and out among the almost impenetrable masses of thorns.

The second illustration shows two young road-runners, probably six weeks old, in the nest. This was in a clump of cactus in Upper Chollas Valley, and the little fellows were very patient and considerate, remaining quiet and looking pleasant while the artist went through the necessary preliminaries and made the plate. The one at the left, however, being somewhat shy, hid his head behind his companion just before the exposure was made. To see if the birds remained, because they were unable to run, I stirred them up a little and they hopped off the nest and ran away through the cactus and weeds, looking back occasionally to see if they were being pursued.—F. W. KELSEY, *Prin. San Diego Com'l. College.*

Early Nesting of *Calypte anna* in the Vicinity of Santa Monica, California.—During the season of 1901 I was fortunate enough to locate several sets of Anna hummers in January and February, but not having much time to devote to oology at that time I was compelled to confine my observations to a very small locality near my residence, namely, a grove of eucalyptus trees which was completely surrounded by a hedge of cypress. These latter were the favorite nesting place of the hummers. The whole grove, eucalyptus, cypress and all, only covered an ordinary city block of about 220 yards square.

In walking through this grove on January 21 of that year I noticed two female Anna hummers gathering material for nests and on watching them closely, soon located the nests, both of which were in cypress trees, and just started, one about twelve and the other twenty-three feet high. These nests were carefully watched and on January 30, I collected my earliest set of Anna hummers. The other only contained one egg on this date but a complete set was taken on February 1. On systematically going over and watching this grove I found seven nests in all before the first of March, all of which contained fresh eggs excepting one, and that nearly full fledged young, which, by my reckoning would have been a fresh set about the second week in January.

Locating so many sets in such a small place and so early in the season seemed to me quite unusual and I determined to follow it up the next season and see what the results would be. Circumstances compelled me to give this up in 1902 but the present year found me with plenty of time on my hands. I made my first observation trip on January 1, and I was rewarded by finding two nests just about ready for eggs. One contained a set on January 4, and the other January 8. My observations were not confined to the special grove I have mentioned above but took in several oak and eucalyptus groves within a radius of two miles of Santa Monica.

Between January 1 and February 18 I have found fifty-two nests of Anna hummingbirds and was only out, then, about two hours every third day. The following from my field book shows the result:

Jan. 1, 2 nests noted, both building.
 Jan. 8, 1 nest noted with a fresh set.
 Jan. 18, 1 nest noted with 2 eggs, slightly incubated.
 Jan. 21, 1 nest noted with two eggs perfectly fresh.
 Jan. 23, 1 nest noted with two eggs slightly incubated.
 Jan. 25, 6 nests noted, 4 of which were building and 2 contained fresh sets.
 Feb. 7, 2 nests noted, one contained a set badly incubated and the other fresh.
 Feb. 8, 1 nest noted, which contained young about $\frac{3}{4}$ grown.

Feb. 10, 9 nests noted, 7 of which were building in the different stages and two fresh sets.

Feb. 11, 6 nests noted, one was building. 3 fresh sets, 1 with nearly grown young and one which contained two eggs of which one was broken, evidently by the parent as the nest was deserted and the tree covered with ants.

Feb. 13, 2 nests noted, both with fresh sets.

Feb. 15, 13 nests noted, 4 building and 9 contained fresh or slightly incubated sets.

Feb. 16, 3 nests noted, all with fresh eggs.

Feb. 18, 4 nests noted, 1 building, 1 with a fresh set and two with badly incubated eggs.

They were in trees as follows: 1 in a cotton wood, 1 in a willow, 2 in sumachs, 5 in cypress, 36 in eucalyptus, and were from seventeen inches high, in a sumach, to about thirty feet in a cotton wood.

The above records, I believe, show that the Anna hummingbird is a very early breeder and in fact, it may be stated that they are just as plentiful in the latter part of January and the whole of February as in March, April, May and June. In looking over my notes for the past ten years I find no time where the Anna hummer has been as plentiful as the present season. We may even find that it breeds more abundantly in February than in any other month, or this may be a freak season, which will only be settled by later developments.—W. LEE CHAMBERS.

The Western Marsh Wren in California.—An examination of the marsh wrens in the collections of Mr. Frank S. Daggett and myself discloses the fact that two easily-

distinguished forms occur in southern California west of the Sierras. One is a small dark-colored bird which is the breeding race and remains throughout the year. This answers to the character of the tule wren (*Cistothorus palustris-paludicola* Baird). The other is a large, pale bird which occurs only in winter. This accords well with the description of the western marsh wren (*Cistothorus palustris plesius* Oberholser). We have specimens of the latter as follows: Coll. F. S. D., No. 412, Feb. 21, 1896, taken at Long Beach; Nos. 409 and 410, Dec. 26, 1895, and No. 414, Jan. 22, 1896, all three taken at Bixby, Los Angeles County. Coll. J. G., No. 596, Dec. 27, 1895, also taken at Bixby; Nos. 1695 and 1696, Nov. 7, 1896, taken at El Monte, Los Angeles County. These specimens are unmistakable and indicate that at least in the winter of 1895-96 there was a general movement of the Great Basin form westward into the San Diegan district. It seems quite improbable that this was an exceptional state of affairs; for nearly all our marsh wrens, *paludicola* as well as *plesius*, were taken during only those two years. And then, too, one recalls the well-known paralled winter movements of the Say phoebe, mountain blue-bird, sage sparrow, and, as recently discovered, the sage thrasher (see Swarth, *Condor* II, July 1900, p. 89). The western marsh wren has previously been recorded along the eastern boundary of the state, well within the Great Basin, whence Oberholser (*Auk* XIV, April 1897, p. 193) reported specimens from Fort Crook, Death Valley and Eagle Lake, the latter a breeding station. The same writer also mentions Marysville in his locality list, and as this is not starred, it may be taken as another instance of winter emigration westward. Observers west of the Sierras should be on the lookout for this race, as interesting facts in regard to its migration and winter distribution may be forthcoming. As an aid in the determination of specimens, I append the following diagnosis: *Cistothorus palustris plesius* ♂, No. 1696, Coll. J. G.; El Monte, Cal.; Nov. 7, 1896.)—Wing 55.5 min. (2.18 inches); tail 55.5 (2.18); culmen 13 (.50); bill from nostril 9.8 (.39); tarsus 20.5 (.80). Ground color of upper parts cinnamon; chest, sides and flanks washed with cinnamon; black markings on wings and tail distinct; black pileum divided by broad cinnamon interval. *Cistothorus palustris paludicola* (♂, No. 4960, Coll. J. G.; Palo Alto, Cal.; Nov. 23, 1901.)—Wing 48 min. (1.90 inches); tail 46 (1.81); culmen 12 (.46); bill from nostril 9 (.36); tarsus 18 (.72). Ground color of upper parts Vandyke brown; chest sides and flanks strongly isabella color; black markings on wings and tail fused together; black pileum only washed with brown toward the forehead.

The specimens above described represent rather extreme manifestations of the two specimens. A number of individuals fall variously between. It may be remarked that some San Diegan district birds are paler than others from the San Francisco Bay region, and both sets are somewhat smaller than the stated measurements of Washington skins. Doubtless these differences are significant of geographical variation locally along the Pacific coast. But our material is as yet too scanty to afford conclusive demonstration.—JOSEPH GRINNELL.

More About the Band-tailed Pigeon (*Columba fasciata*).—The interesting article in the January *CONDOR* by C. S. Sharp on the Band-tailed Pigeon set me to looking up my records and I find a few notes bearing on the subject.

Each winter a few of the pigeons are seen in the canyons on either side of the San Geronio Pass between San Geronio and San Jacinto peaks, and a few pairs remain to nest higher in the mountains. I have seen on both mountains at an altitude of six to eight thousand feet old nests which I took to be those of the pigeon. May 14, 1897, I found on San Jacinto mountain, at about 6500 feet elevation, two nests containing young birds, one in each nest. The first was just hatched and the other half grown. Both nests were in oak trees fifteen to twenty feet from the ground and were discovered only as the old bird fluttered from the nest. The location of each nest was on a horizontal branch in thick part of the tree and rather difficult to find. They were mere platforms of twigs similar to nests of the mourning dove and it is a marvel how the eggs can be kept warm enough to hatch, resting on such an airy structure and at that altitude in springtime.

During the spring of 1901 I saw several pairs on Rabbit Mountain, 7100 feet elevation, east of Hot Springs, Warner Ranch, San Diego County. Several pairs and a flock of seven remained on the mountain till at least June and though I found three old nests, all in oak trees, no new ones were seen.

In Lost Valley about 5000 feet elevation, between Rabbit Mountain and Coyote Creek I saw several pairs and a flock of a dozen or more. They were still there June 12, when I left, but no nests were discovered.

In March, 1901, great flocks of the pigeons poured into San Geronio Pass and fed in the barley fields. For about two weeks there were hundreds of them but they all left as suddenly as they had appeared. Their method of feeding was peculiar. Instead of spreading out they kept together, alternately walking and flying. Those behind would fly a few feet ahead of the advance line, alight, and walk along picking up grain until other rear ones would fly ahead and it came their turn again.

In this way the flock advanced, some in the air all the time and ground was covered quite rapidly. A specimen secured measured 26 inches across the expanded wings and his crop contained 615 grains of barley by actual count. Others had eaten the large-sized acorns, growing in the mountains, the swallowing of which would seem an utter impossibility. The oldest inhabitant of the Pass stated that only twice before in the last fifty years had the pigeons appeared in large numbers.—M. FRENCH GILMAN, *Banning, Cal.*

Correction of Doubtful Records.—Believing the suggestion made by Mr. Joseph Grinnell in *THE CONDOR* (Vol. IV, No. 1) that all errors in identification are best promptly corrected I have gone carefully over all my published writings and append the following list of doubtful records.

1. *Dendroica occidentalis*—*Osprey*, Vol. III, No. 4. Possibly *D. nigrescens*; no skin taken as the Guardian of Yosemite Valley prohibits the use of firearms. 2. *Oroscoptes montanus*. 3. *Catherpes mexicanus conspersus*—*Osprey*, Vol. V, No. 1. Out of the 43 species recorded from Sur River the two above species are the only ones I find to have been admitted on insufficient evidence. 4. *Tachycineta thalassina*—*Osprey*, Vol. V, No. 8. Skins taken the following year (1902) proved this to be *Tachycineta bicolor*.—MILTON S. RAY.

Wasted Talent.—Upon laying open a cavity in an oak, in which some time previously I had discovered a pair of olivaceous fly-catchers (*Myiarchus l. olivascens*) to be building a nest, I found that the occupants had displayed a taste quite unusual in birds that nest in the dark and out of sight.

The cavity was an ancient one, made originally by woodpeckers. It was much enlarged by the shrinking of the walls, which were seamed and furrowed by cut worms or other agents. The most conspicuous of these depressions were filled in with nest material, mostly feathers, and so well inserted, particularly some coarse feathers, that they were not very easily removed. It was as tho they had been tamped in. All the more conspicuous depressions up to the height of the opening, some five inches above rim of nest were treated thus.

Was the work instigated by that instinct for beautifying their nests displayed by birds that build them where they can be seen by man? It scarcely added to the comfort of the nest, being quite above it, and it stopped the entrance of no light or air.

After removing the material I regretted not having photographed the work.

Afterward, in two other instances, I found the same thing done tho to a less marked degree, so, it seems, it is a characteristic of this interesting bird.

The nest referred to contained four eggs of dimensions as follows: .70 by .55, .70 by .53, .69 by .56, .68 by .54 inches.

The material of which the nest was composed was less than half hair, which forms almost the sole nest material used by its congener *M. cinerascens* and included ravelings of gunnysack, used by the naturalist as bait to discover the nest, cow hair, and rabbit fur, dried grass, bark-fibers and many feathers.—R. D. LUSK, *Tucson, Ariz.*

Minutes of Club Meetings

NORTHERN DIVISION: JULY.—The regular meeting of the Northern Division was held at the residence of the President, Mr. H. R. Taylor, in Alameda, Cal., July 11, 1903, ten members and three visitors being present. Twelve candidates were elected to membership as follows: P. M. Silloway, Lewistown, Mont., Joseph Clemens, Monterey, Cal., Fred M. Dille, Longmont, Colo., Henry Stewart Gane, Santa Barbara, Cal., Mrs. Juliette C. Harding, Antioch, Cal., James S. Cooper, Hayward, Cal., Wm. Frederick Bade, Berkeley, Cal., Miss Ida M. Eshenberg, Santa Barbara, Cal., Herman T. Bohlman, Portland, Ore., H. H. Sheldon, San Francisco, H. H. Bailey, San Francisco, J. S. Hunter, Watsonville, Cal.

Three new names were proposed for membership: Miss Gertrude B. Forrester, Round Mountain, Cal., Foster C. Wright, Los Angeles, Cal., Prof. F. E. L. Beal, Washington, D. C.

The resignation of Mr. Chas. R. Keyes from the office of Secretary of the Cooper Club was read and accepted by unanimous vote of the members present; a vote of thanks and expression of regrets was extended to Mr. Keyes by the Club and the Secretary pro tem instructed to correspond with Mr. Keyes to that effect. Mr. Kaeding was elected secretary of the Club for the unexpired term of Mr. Keyes, resigned.

Mr. Kaeding spoke on the subject of vernacular names of birds vs. the Latin names, and made a motion that in all matter published in *THE CONDOR*, the vernacular name, when given, be followed by the Latin name of the bird. The motion was carried and the Secretary pro tem was instructed to notify the editor of *THE CONDOR* to that effect.

Mr. Emerson then spoke at some length on, "The Bird-life on the Farallone Islands," comparing the aspect of the islands as they were in 1887 with the present conditions, and discussing the probable causes of the decrease in certain of the species and the increase in others. Mr. Kaeding made a few remarks on the impressions made by a first visit to these islands. Mr. Cohen spoke on the "Blackbirds of Alameda County," illustrating his remarks with a series of specimens. Prof. F. E. L. Beal spoke briefly on the work being done by the Dep't of Agriculture on the foods of birds and their relation to agriculture and horticulture.

After a recess for refreshment and informal discussion, the meeting adjourned to meet in Palo Alto, September 12.—H. B. KAEDING, Secretary.